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ADDRESS OF GREETING

FROM

THE ESSEX INSTITUTE

TO

THE LYNN HISTORICAL SOCIETY

ON THE

OCCASION

OF ITS

TENTH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION

DECEMBER 18, 1906

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DELIVERED BY

ABNER C. GOODELL

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A. C. Goddell.

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*Mr. President, Ladies and Gentlemen:*

I have the honor to be charged by Gen. Appleton, the worthy President of the Essex Institute, with the agreeable duty of conveying to the Lynn Historical Society, on the tenth anniversary of its formation, the greetings of the Institute. Being one of the one hundred and seventy odd members who on the memorable seventeenth of April, eighteen hundred and ninety seven, with two others only who subscribed one month earlier, constitute the pioneers of this body; and moreover, having been an early member of another organization formed fifty-four years ago, which may properly be deemed the progenitor of the flourishing Historical Society of to-day, I trust I shall not be regarded as intrusive or presumptuous if I do not confine myself strictly to a perfunctory compliance with the letter of my commission, but take the liberty to ask you to follow me in a brief review of the past, for the purpose of comparison and to find encouragement for the future. I feel authorized to say that the Institute makes no claim to distinction because of priority or pre-eminence in either of the two branches—natural and civic history—in the pursuit of which members of both societies have so creditably engaged.

Neither the society in Salem nor this in Lynn, can claim corporate or permanent existence for much more than seventy years. The Essex Institute, you know, was legally incorporated in 1848, uniting the Essex County Society of Natural History, organized in 1833, and incorporated in 1836 with the Essex County Historical Society, organized and incorporated in 1821.

In like manner, though beginning somewhat later

than the Salem experiment, the progress of development of social, literary and scientific societies in Lynn, culminating in the formation of this society, may be summarized thus :— Beginning with the Franklin Club of 1836–7, next the Social Union of 1843, then the Exploring Circle of 1850, and finally the Young Men's Debating Society of 1852, which continued until 1859, transferring a part of its membership to the Library Association in 1855, and its remaining members finally merging into the Society whose tenth anniversary we this evening commemorate.

In comparing the status in literature and science of the rival societies in Lynn and Salem, it is evident that Lynn has no cause for humiliation at the contrast. In 1850, when Lynn became a city, her population, including the inhabitants of Swampscott and Nahant, which had not then been set off into separate townships, was little more than 14,000, whereas Salem then contained something more than 20,000. Again the Salem society embraced the whole county of Essex, including Lynn, and was located in the center of a population containing an exceptionally large proportion of college graduates, upon whose coöperation they depended, whereas the Lynn societies were mainly local in their constitution and fields of research.

Another comparison favorable to Lynn in priority of date and excellence of compilation, is its contribution to local history. Alonzo Lewis's History of Lynn first appeared in 1829. This work which was unrivalled, had been preceded by only three other histories of Essex County towns. These were, first, the History of Newburyport, by Caleb Cushing, announced in 1822, but not published until four years later,—a small duodecimo, the Civic history therein narrated being comprised in 32 pages, a work of infinitely

less labor and interest than Lewis's History. Felt's Annals of Salem, a work much in the style of the ordinary interleaved almanac but valuable for its abundance of historical data which the author's official connection with the Massachusetts Historical Society, and the opportunities he had enjoyed in assorting and arranging the papers in the office of the Secretary of the Commonwealth, enabled him to collect free of expense, appeared first, in 1827; and the Rev. Abiel Abbot's History of Andover, published the same year in which the History of Lynn appeared, a small volume, which, if issued for the first time to-day, would hardly be deemed worthy to be classed with town histories. Succeeding these have appeared Felt's Annals of Ipswich, in 1834; Edwin Martin Stone's History of Beverly, in 1843, Joshua Coffin's History of Newburyport, in 1845, Rev. John W. Hanson's History of Danvers, in 1848.

These discursive outlines of the story of the rise and progress of towns in Essex County are types of all later publications, with the exception of J. J. Babson's truly thorough and valuable "History of Cape Ann." Lewis's first edition furnished a model to the best writers of town histories and gave an impulse toward improvement which is still felt throughout New England, and, to-day, with the additions and amendments made by James R. Newhall, it maintains its high place in that class of literature.

In some branches of natural science in the pursuit of which the Institute and this society have vied, the public is indebted to Lynn for valuable contributions. Without attempting to specify all instances in this line I point to Cyrus M. Tracy's classification of Essex County plants which the Institute has incorporated in its Proceedings, this being a notable case of assumption by the Institute of credit for

work which might have been claimed as exclusively due to Lynn.

Leaving out of consideration the field of romance and original poetry, we may compare some notable instances of competitive achievements in philology by scholars in Lynn and Salem respectively.

It is a great distinction which Salem claims in having produced the author of the first Greek and English lexicon, John Pickering, who, also, jointly with Daniel Appleton White, so long president of the Institute, gave to the world the first critical edition of Sallust, but these achievements are more than offset by the equally profound and more useful Grammar of English Grammars, by Goold Brown, of Lynn, a work so thorough and exhaustive, so critically exact in every detail, and so fortified by references to examples of the usage of the best writers of the English tongue, and analogies in other languages, that it well deserves to stand as the final authority in all disputes concerning the syntax of our mother tongues. The title of this book being metaphrastic of the title of the French "*Grammaire des Grammaires*" of Gerault Duvivier, does not imply, as some may have supposed, that its author arrogantly claimed for it absolute superiority, but merely that it was a critical examen of the rules laid down by other grammarians, which rules he used to illustrate the errors against which it was his purpose to warn his reader. There is nothing that I remember in the field of literary criticism more amusing than the adroit manner in which he detects the faults of his predecessors, and the merciless assurance with which he convicts the offenders. This book alone establishes the fame of Lynn as the home of this eminent Quaker scholar.

Nothing struck me more forcibly in my intercourse



with the young men with whom I came in contact as a member of the Young Men's Debating Society than their quick wit and general intelligence, and the intellectual superiority and literary acquirements of many of them. It may be invidious to dwell on this head, to which justice cannot be done with such brevity as the occasion requires, but I venture to mention one or two instances;—first, James Edward Oliver, the accomplished mathematician. Mathematics had been a hobby in the Salem High School, insomuch that Master Henry K. Oliver had found it necessary to import Ingram's Mathematics from England, as a text-book, which, beginning with the elements of algebra, geometry and trigonometry, proceeded through the mensuration of surfaces and solids, conic sections to ungulæ, surveying, gauging, gunnery the works of artificers, strength of materials, spherical trigonometry, and the use and construction of logarithms. But in my acquaintance with the modest James Edward I found a mathematician to whom my studies in Salem were but a rudimentary primer. Later, away from home, he found full appreciation among others devoted to his favorite science, and won a national reputation.

Another similar case is that of my lamented friend, and your associate, Theodore Attwill. Having taught Latin and Greek as assistant instructor in the Lynn High School he retired to devote himself to the more lucrative calling of the "gentle craft," but continuing his studies at leisure he became proficient in the literature of other languages. He was also particularly interested in the study of early English history and literature; Chaucer and Camden were his favorites, and he had a wide acquaintance with continental writers. I may apostrophize him as Pope did Swift, as being at home—

“Whether thou choose Cervantes’ serious air  
Or laugh and shake in Rabelais’ easy chair.”

It is a pity that so many bright young fellows with every natural qualification to gratify a lofty ambition to make themselves and others supremely happy by the full exercise of their genius in the pursuit of science and literature should have been deprived of the opportunity by the insatiable wolf at the door, so touchingly lamented by Gray :—

“Chill penury repressed their noble rage  
And froze the genial current of their soul.”

But this state of things could not last and will cease forever if you so determine. The growing wealth of your city and the increased profit of new industries will enable you to lend a hand to every ambitious deserving son of toil who needs assistance in climbing from the depths of discouragement and despair into which he has fallen or is in imminent danger of falling for want of pecuniary assistance, and to afford efficient aid to genius struggling for recognition.

The valuation of Lynn in 1850 was nearly five millions; in 1905 this had increased to over 56 millions; and a century hence this last amount will be more than doubled. In the disposal of these riches this society will doubtless in some respects have a determining voice. I predict for those living at that happy day that they will see this society housed in a temple of spacious and exquisite architecture, designed and ornamented by native artists, with statues of the men whom we have seen conducting the schools and promoting the arts which have supplanted the humble schoolhouse and shoe-shop of their forefathers. By that time the Public Library will rival the best in the land, so that you will have no need to seek information or revel in delights of literature elsewhere.

Lynn has the best natural attractions that could be desired. On seaside and hillside, and in the plains between, your naturalists with the aid of your Park Commissioners will restore to your great public garden, the magnolia and the laurel which have been exiled to the woods of Cape Ann and the shores of the Merrimac; the bobolink will consort with his old-time companions, the song-sparrow who has never left you, and other sweet singers, remembered but now rarely heard, and the flaming oriole and other birds of beauty. The swamp pink and the white blossoming dogwood will again be companions of the fragrant sweet fern and the bayberry; and columbines and lilies will unlace their fragrance and expose their delicate charms.

This city already has an abundant supply of wholesome sweet water and invites the stranger to visit its attractive beaches that rival in beauty the shores of the Bay of Naples, to mitigate the heats of summer, for those who court the cool sea air on an excursion only a few minutes away from the metropolis.

The vision expands; and I must leave to you who have any imagination the details of a picture as beautiful as Milton describes the view from the hill of science: "so smooth, so green, so full of goodly prospect and melodious sounds on every side that the harp of Orpheus was not more charming."

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